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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 10 June 1993, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

OTHER MATTERS (continued)

(b) PROPOSAL CONCERNING LOCATION OF UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND HEADQUARTERS (continued) (DP/1993/55 and Add.1-3)

1. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Council), introducing the report of the Administrator (DP/1993/55 and Add.1-3), said that following the suspension of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had sent all Governments a note asking for their views on the potential impact for the United Nations system of moving the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Programme (UNFPA) to Bonn. Of the 46 replies received from Member States, 41 indicated negative implications of relocation, 3 indicated positive implications, and 2 indicated that it was too early to give a definitive response.

2. A questionnaire on the logistical and related financial, administrative and representational implications for Member States of a relocation had been prepared in cooperation with Germany and the United States and been distributed to all Member States. Of the responses received from Member States 59 referred only to the disadvantages of a relocation, 4 referred only to advantages, 5 indicated both advantages and disadvantages, and 8 were neutral.

3. The examination of all programme-related, budgetary, legal and administrative implications of the offer, conducted by units of the United Nations Secretariat and of UNDP and UNFPA, concluded that while there would be considerable transition costs a move to Bonn could result in savings in recurrent expenditure.

4. The information requested by the Governing Council had been provided in a factual and neutral manner and no UNDP or UNFPA position regarding the relocation had been advocated in the report.

5. Mr. KURTH (Germany) said that, although a number of points had not been fully clarified, the working group had found that Bonn was an appropriate location for hosting international organizations such as UNDP and UNFPA. Housing, infrastructure and other facilities there were appropriate, and - because premises would be provided free of rent and major maintenance operations would be reimbursed - a reduction in recurrent expenditure of between $10 million to $14 million per year was possible. It was more difficult to draw reliable conclusions from the questionnaire on the logistical and related financial, administrative and representational implications of a relocation for Member States. While a large majority of countries saw only disadvantages for themselves, more than half of the replies received came from small island States which would have logistical and representational difficulties if the relocation took place. Furthermore, less than half of the membership had replied to the questionnaire.

6. His country was of the opinion that a relocation of UNDP and UNFPA to Bonn would not hamper efforts to restructure the United Nations, and might even contribute to strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of operational

(Mr. Kurth, Germany)

activities for development. The proposal had been made because it was thought to be attractive to a majority of Member States and because his country wished to make a constructive contribution to reform efforts. Since a number of issues needed further clarification, he suggested that the subject be kept on the agenda for the following year.

7. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that while his Government appreciated Germany's generosity and strong commitment to the United Nations it believed that UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should remain headquartered in New York City. That position was consistent with the Secretary-General's efforts to consolidate United Nations activities. The close proximity of international and regional financial institutions had produced a synergetic effect that would be lost if the entities concerned were to disperse. His Government was concerned about the burden such a move would place on other Governments, particularly those of developing countries. The work of the three entities was too important to be interrupted during the move and the resettlement process - a period estimated to be at least one year. Lastly, all institutions needed a centre of gravity, and that centre had been well established in New York City for the United Nations system and any attempt to disperse it would be dysfunctional.

8. Ms. LØJ (Observer for Denmark), supported by Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom), Ms. KNUTSON (Canada), Mr. DENG Zhihui (China), Mr. ROHNER (Switzerland), Mr. LUNDBORG (Sweden), Mr. ESCURE (France), Mr. FONDI (Italy) and Mr. VAN LANDUYT (Belgium), said that Germany's proposal was an expression of its dedication and increased involvement in United Nations development activities and deserved serious consideration. While the proposal would have positive effects on the administrative budget, it should not be considered on the basis of cost-effectiveness alone, but also within the framework of the discussions on the reform of the United Nations system. Furthermore, given the concerns raised by Member States in connection with the relocation, her delegation was of the view that it would be prudent to postpone a decision on the offer in order to allow sufficient time for consideration of all the issues involved.

9. Mr. SEED (New Zealand) said that the position of the majority of those United Nations Members which had replied to the questionnaire was clear from the documents before the Council, and he believed that their reservations about the relocation were shared by a majority of the membership as a whole.

10. His delegation believed that relocation was inconsistent with efforts to streamline and coordinate the United Nations system, would place an additional and unacceptable burden on developing and small developed countries, and would cause significant disruption for the entities concerned. It would also have negative financial implications in the short and medium term, and would irreparably damage the synergetic relationship which derived from the proximity of UNDP and UNFPA to the United Nations economic and social departments and the Bretton Woods institutions. The move would do nothing to promote greater efficiency and economy and would probably result in a marked increased in non-resident accreditation to UNDP and UNFPA, which would detract from the frequency and effectiveness of liaison with UNDP. Given the increasing complexity of the development mandate and the current decline in resources, all efforts should be focused on core issues. It would therefore be prudent to refrain from further consideration of the relocation offer.

11. Mr. DIAZ-AGUILERA (Observer for Venezuela) said that, while it appreciated the generosity of the offer made by the German Government, his delegation agreed with the objections contained in the replies to the questionnaire. Any change in the headquarters of UNDP and UNFPA would make access to them difficult for the international community, particularly those countries with more limited resources. It was more convenient and less expensive to maintain diplomatic personnel in New York, and the headquarters of UNDP and UNFPA should remain there. However, his delegation did not oppose the proposal to postpone taking a decision on the matter.

12. Mr. COGHLAN (Observer for Australia) said that his delegation was unable to support the relocation of UNDP and UNFPA headquarters, as it had pointed out in its reply to the questionnaire. It supported the contention by the Pacific island countries that they would not be in a position to establish and maintain representation in Bonn, as well as in New York. Any further dispersal of the United Nations system would not be beneficial to its operational efficiency.

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES (continued)

(c) UNITED NATIONS SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE (DP/1993/43)

13. Mr. BRANNER (Director, United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office), introducing the report of the Administrator on the activities of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) (DP/1993/43), said that in recent years UNSO had placed special emphasis on providing assistance in the planning, coordination and monitoring of activities related to the sound management of natural resources, so as to ensure that desertification control activities were part of the dynamic process of establishing strategic frameworks for intervention. Assistance had been given to African countries, particularly in the Sudano-Sahelian region, in the framework of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). That assistance had helped the African countries develop and harmonize their contribution to the Conference, which had been vital for the drawing-up of chapter 12 of Agenda 21, on desertification and drought. The experience acquired would be useful for the follow-up to the Conference, with particular reference to the formulation of an international convention on desertification. In the light of the decisions reached in Rio, a review had been carried out of the functions and areas of concentration of UNSO, the conclusions of which were contained in the report. In addition, UNDP planned to strengthen the functions of UNSO as the body responsible for supplying technical support and acting as a focal point for desertification. Placing UNSO within the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation had strengthened collaboration between the different units within UNDP headquarters and had encouraged complementarity and harmonization of sustainable development measures.

14. The joint venture agreement between UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to support the implementation of the World Plan of Action to Control Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region was one of the best examples of active cooperation between the two organizations. In 1991, the UNEP Governing Council had decided to double its programme support for UNSO in the period 1992-1993 and had recently confirmed that decision for the next budgetary period. He hoped that the UNDP Governing Council would consider contributing an equal amount to the joint venture.

(Mr. Branner)

15. In response to General Assembly resolution 47/188 on the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, UNSO had established a programme of assistance, which included technical and financial support at national level to ensure effective participation by Sudano-Sahelian countries in the negotiating sessions, promotion and financial support at subregional and regional level for the holding of consultation meetings and assistance in the preparation of working documents. In the endeavour to implement the strategies contained in chapter 12 of Agenda 21, a fundamental change of approach was needed, with greater emphasis on protecting and improving the livelihoods of the inhabitants of countries prone to drought and desertification and meeting their basic needs, as a way of breaking the nexus between poverty and land degradation. The convention could serve as an instrument for fostering greater national, regional and international commitment, actions and cooperation.

16. Despite the renewed attention focused on drought and desertification as a result of the Rio decisions and the proposed international convention, the resources allocated to the problem had continued to decrease. The current negotiations on the convention seemed to have led to a "wait-and-see" approach, which was being used to justify postponement of concrete measures to implement chapter 12 of Agenda 21. There had been little response to the appeal made in resolution 47/188 for additional resources to enable the Sudano-Sahelian countries to participate effectively in the negotiations. The situation was worrying both for the countries concerned and for the international community as a whole. The physical and human impact of desertification knew no frontiers and, unless timely action was taken, the financial and human costs would be enormous.

17. Mr. NISSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, welcomed the recent, gradual shift in the role of UNSO from support for operational projects for desertification control measures to increased cooperation with Governments in the planning and coordination of natural resources management, and its assistance, in the UNCED process, in the preparation of national reports and the formulation of an African common position.

18. As to the role of UNSO with regard to desertification control in the follow-up to the Conference on Environment and Development, there was a growing realization that the issues of drought and desertification should be included as an important aspect of the overall management of natural resources. The Conference had encouraged the move away from direct operational support for specific desertification control measures towards increased emphasis on assistance for capacity-building and long-term planning of natural resources management, including dryland management, and had contributed to stronger links between environment and development, particularly by underlining the need for capacity-building and for the strengthening of national institutions for natural resources management.

19. The current economic situation in most donor countries and the reduction in contributions for certain development-cooperation activities underlined the need to rationalize the work of the various United Nations organizations active in the field of desertification control and natural resources management and to seek the most cost-effective way of organizing their activities. The resource base for UNSO was very weak, and a more stable financing mechanism for the work

(Mr. Nissen, Norway)

of the United Nations relating to the issues of drought and desertification must be found. United Nations assistance in improving the management of natural resources in dryland areas should be given higher priority by being placed within the context of sustainable development.

20. The Nordic countries supported proposals for a reorientation of UNSO's main areas of concentration. UNSO should focus on providing support with respect to policy and planning issues, simultaneously enhancing national and regional capacity in areas that had a direct impact on drought and desertification; should have a reduced involvement in direct project management; and, most important of all, should play, primarily, an advisory role, and provide technical and substantive backstopping on aspects of dryland management of environment and development projects funded by various sources within UNDP.

21. An administrative rearrangement of the organizational structure of UNSO must be discussed. UNSO should function as a focal point on issues concerning drought and desertification, and service the UNDP system. Its work would be strengthened by closer integration in the general work of UNDP on environment and development, and it would be more appropriately located as a technical unit within the programme support units of the UNDP Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation, without direct responsibility for project management. The proposal would not have the effect of closing down UNSO or giving less priority to the needs of recipient countries for assistance; it would transform UNSO from being a separate fund with its own project portfolio to serving as a technical, advisory and backstopping unit for the rest of the UNDP system on issues related to drought and desertification.

22. By means of a combination of the technical expertise of UNSO with the growing role of UNDP in the field of environment and development, programmes targeted to mitigate drought and desertification would be dealt with in a wider context and be supported by UNDP's general work to promote an enabling institutional and legal environment for sustainable development. The role of UNSO in sensitization and advocacy would have greater impact and reach, and the integration of UNSO in the UNDP system would lead to more cost-effective management of scarce resources for technical assistance. In such a rearrangement, it was vitally important to preserve the technical knowledge of UNSO on dryland management and to continue to build on its long experience in cooperating with regional and subregional organizations, as well as to maintain its capacity to support countries affected by drought and desertification in participating in international negotiations. Integration of the technical staff of UNSO within the programme support units of the UNDP Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation would be an important step towards securing a more stable financing mechanism for the employment of UNSO technical advisers. The Nordic countries believed that the cost of UNSO technical staff should be absorbed by the regular UNDP budget.

23. Resources for dryland management activities should be channelled through UNDP's regular programme, through UNDP-administered funds like the United Nations Capital Development Fund, or attained through extrabudgetary programmes like Capacity 21. The strengthening of local, national and regional capacities to manage natural resources in dryland areas, with the technical backstopping of UNSO, was a natural element of Capacity 21, and so the administrative rearrangement should not prevent the United Nations system from responding to

(Mr. Nissen, Norway)

the particular needs of the countries affected by drought and desertification. The rearrangement would, however, relieve UNSO from direct management responsibilities and provide it with the opportunity to consolidate its major advisory role. UNSO's tasks should be programme development, technical advice and backstopping for UNDP's core programme, as well as all UNDP-administered funds and larger extrabudgetary programmes such as Capacity 21. It should also be responsible for facilitating coordination and advocacy, and assist in encouraging donors to mobilize resources through UNDP for improved dryland management. It would also have an important role in providing technical support in connection with the negotiating process for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, and in mobilizing resources for adequate participation in that process by the Sudano-Sahelian countries.

24. Mr. TOURE (Observer for Guinea-Bissau) said that Guinea-Bissau, like all developing countries, confronted acute problems relating to the environment and economic development. Despite the great efforts it was making to lay the foundations of sustained development, the results were often limited because of the obstacles encountered by less developed countries in general and African countries in particular. His country was aware that economic recovery and development depended above all on policies and measures implemented at the national level. However, sustainable development could not be achieved unless equity was achieved in the international economic system.

25. His delegation expressed appreciation for the valuable assistance provided to the Sahelian States in their efforts to protect and restore the environment and achieve food security and sustainable development. The subregion, consisting of nine young nations, was engaged in a difficult struggle in the face of a socio-ecological and economic crisis which had raged for nearly two decades. UNSO had helped the subregion overcome difficult challenges and define and implement strategies for better development, and had provided substantial financial resources and technical assistance.

26. Drawing on its experience, UNSO had adapted its policies and strategies and improved its approaches and programmes. During the last decade of the twentieth century, UNSO needed to help the countries of the Sahel develop programmes for research on climate and agrometeorological forecasts; establish programmes for the long-term management of natural resources and monitoring of desertification; develop the agriculture and livestock sector and improve trade while ensuring the development of local grain and other products; promote the development of the subregion through economic integration bodies; and, at the world level, support efforts to protect the common environment.

27. The projects and programmes would be implemented on the basis of an approach which would take into account all sociopolitical, cultural and economic factors and bring together the forces of the towns and the countryside. A synergy of public and private sectors was needed and a partnership between rural populations, the State and development partners.

28. Mr. AKPLOGAN (Benin) said that UNSO was contributing very positively to the efforts of the 22 countries of the region in combating drought and desertification. Its support had made it possible to consolidate local capacities and improve productivity through the integrated management of natural resources. It had also assisted in the preparatory process for the United

(Mr. Akplogan, Benin)

Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and had an important role to play in following up the implementation of the decisions taken and the recommendations made at the Conference. It was also assisting in the process of negotiating an international convention to combat desertification. UNSO's functions and competence should therefore be strengthened; at the same time, it needed to be given greater financial support.

29. Mr. MAIGA (Observer for Mali) said that for more than two decades Mali had suffered from the disastrous effects of drought and desertification. The efforts to combat that scourge at the national level were receiving support from UNSO. It was assisting in road maintenance, the management of renewable natural resources, and the formulation of a national programme to combat desertification. While the financial amounts committed were modest, they had been used for concrete action at the field level.

30. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had recognized in Agenda 21 that special consideration needed to be given to the preparation of an international convention to combat desertification. The General Assembly, in resolution 47/188, called on UNSO to assist African countries in the negotiating process. Mali therefore hoped that UNSO's financial and technical capacities would be strengthened, particularly in view of its flexibility, relatively small size and concentration on the questions of environment and development. His delegation hoped that donors would continue to provide substantial technical and financial support to UNSO so as to lay the foundations of lasting development in the countries covered by UNSO's mandate.

31. Mr. MOTSWAGAE (Observer for Botswana) said that UNSO's proposals on ways and means of combating drought and desertification were very compatible with the thinking of his Government. Botswana supported the proposal that UNSO should help identify needs relating to capacity-building for sound natural resources management in arid and semi-arid regions of Africa.

32. At the Conference on Environment and Development, Botswana had called on the United Nations system to focus more on drought and desertification and to extend UNSO's mandate to cover countries in southern Africa; it welcomed the Conference's recommendation that UNSO's experience be used to assist countries in Africa affected by drought and desertification.

33. UNSO performed excellent work in helping the Sudano-Sahelian countries draw up projects to combat drought and desertification and coordinating the management of natural resources at the field level. It also provided excellent advisory services to those countries.

34. His delegation would make a specific proposal that UNSO's mandate be extended to cover the countries of southern Africa, in the context of the international convention to combat desertification.

35. Mrs. MAIKARFI (Observer for Niger) said that drought and desertification were a major problem for Niger, which was one of the 22 countries which had received assistance from UNSO over the past two decades. UNSO had assisted in formulating a national plan to combat desertification, in 1985, with the goal of halting and reversing the desertification process, and had financed many projects. UNSO had also assisted in preparations for the United Nations

(Mr. Maikarfi, Observer, Niger)

Conference on Environment and Development; as a result, the Sahelian countries had been able to make the international community aware of the importance and seriousness of drought and desertification in the development process and the need to accord special and urgent attention to them. Her delegation therefore joined others in appealing for additional resources for UNSO to enable it to preserve its identity at the organizational level and play its full role under chapter 12 of Agenda 21. It hoped that the Council would reaffirm the uniqueness of UNSO and strengthen its resources.

36. Mr. NEBIE (Observer for Burkina Faso) said that the mobilization of a number of countries, particularly African countries, at the Conference on Environment and Development to urge the formulation of an international convention to combat desertification had been an initial response to a scourge which seriously jeopardized development efforts. His delegation was gratified that the intergovernmental negotiating committee had begun its work.

37. After the Conference, which had endorsed the indissoluble link between environment and development, UNSO's mandate had been reaffirmed, as indicated in Agenda 21 and in the report of the Administrator (DP/1993/43). His delegation appreciated the record of activities carried out in the field by UNSO and was therefore deeply concerned about the decline in resources, precisely at a time when needs were increasing. Additional resources were needed for the implementation of Agenda 21. Moreover, most of the countries served by UNSO were least developed countries, which required special attention from the international community. UNSO provided invaluable support for those countries. His delegation appealed to traditional and new donors to increase the level of their contributions to UNSO. His Government, for its part, would continue its efforts in the subregion to combat desertification. It also hoped that UNSO would further strengthen its capacity-building role.

38. Ms. COLEMAN-ADEBAYO (United States of America) said that UNSO had an impressive record of interventions in carefully chosen projects; the United States welcomed its emphasis on assisting recipient countries in establishing a country-wide framework for combating desertification as well as its efforts to strengthen institutional frameworks within countries suffering from desertification and to monitor the process of desertification through data collection. It also acknowledged UNSO's pioneering efforts in local capacity-building within resource-dependent communities.

39. Increasingly, the desertification struggle would be shaped by the national environmental action planning process, the outcome of the international convention to combat desertification and the desire of African representatives to take the lead in initiatives affecting Africa. Her delegation hoped that combination of processes would produce substantially improved coordination and cooperation in all areas of endeavour to combat desertification, particularly at the community and national levels. UNSO must determine the best way of bringing its experience and expertise into that cooperative framework. The report (DP/1993/43) was a good start but did not go far enough. UNSO must be able to show how its strategic frameworks fitted into the national environmental action planning process, and articulate the relationship its ongoing operational activities would have with other organizations involved in related activities.

(Ms. Coleman-Adebayo, United States)

40. The future of UNSO depended on its ability to change with the times. Capacity 21 would offer unprecedented challenges and opportunities for it to assume an appropriate role in the operationalization of the project. Resource-dependent communities in the Sudano-Sahelian region relied on UNSO for assistance and leadership in combating desertification. Close collaboration between UNDP and UNSO would be crucial for the project's success. Her delegation would appreciate a report from UNSO at the next session of the Council outlining how UNSO had coordinated and participated in the implementation of Capacity 21.

41. Mr. ESCURE (France) said that the Sudano-Sahelian region was one which needed a great deal of support from the international community, which was why his country directed a significant part of its development aid to it. UNSO had been called upon to play a crucial role in the struggle against desertification and it was important to consider the future of that programme, and how it could be adapted to a changing economic context.

42. The representative of Norway, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, had indicated the way in which UNSO could contribute in the future to the struggle against drought and desertification, and UNSO's integration into a larger structure clearly had much to recommend it. There was a need to coordinate and give priority to the activities of different agencies dealing with the same subject, and it was right that UNSO should relinquish responsibility for direct management of projects in favour of assuming the role of assessor. However, it was very important to preserve UNSO's identity; experience had shown that with the expertise it had accumulated UNSO as a whole was much more than the sum of its parts, and it would be risky to split it up.

43. Ms. KNUTSON (Canada) shared many of the sentiments expressed by the representative of Norway on behalf of the Nordic countries. UNSO played a modest role in the larger environmental context, compared with other agencies and offices, and in its future role it would have to integrate itself with others and evolve in accordance with the various adjustments and the division of labour undertaken by them. Many representatives of countries in the region had spoken positively of UNSO, and had stressed the importance of its role in the preparatory process leading up to the Conference on Environment and Development, and she was confident that it would be able to integrate itself successfully in the broader context while preserving its particular ability to support national capacity for addressing the problems of drought and desertification.

44. Mr. MOKOTJO (Lesotho) noted that chapter 38 of Agenda 21 required the role of UNSO, operating under the umbrella of UNDP and with the support of UNEP, to be strengthened so that UNSO could assume an appropriate major advisory role and participate effectively in the implementation of Agenda 21 provisions related to combating drought and desertification, and that the experience gained be used by all other countries affected by drought and desertification, in particular those in Africa. The General Assembly, in its resolution 47/188, had established an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa.

(Mr. Mokotjo, Lesotho)

45. Countries of southern Africa, which were emerging from a devastating, two-year drought, naturally had a strong interest in the elaboration of such a convention, and it was the strong belief of his delegation that UNSO's mandate should clearly reflect the provisions of chapter 38 of Agenda 21, and that its financial resources should be increased in line with the recommendations made by the Administrator in his report. Partial fulfilment of the support package for UNSO would not lead to the achievements expected under Agenda 21.

46. Mr. TWITE (United Kingdom) said that his country in general approved of the activities of UNSO in supporting programmes to combat desertification in Africa, but considered that it would be necessary to review UNSO's role in the light of the international convention to combat desertification and any commitments and institutional arrangements it might contain. He had noted with interest the proposals made by Norway on behalf of the Nordic countries with regard to institutional rearrangements, but, while sympathizing with the motives behind them, and agreeing on the need for integration within the system, he considered that the proposals might be premature and should be examined more closely at a later stage.

47. His Government fully endorsed the emphasis placed by the Administrator's report on support for local management of resources and village-based activities; the principal role of UNSO should be to support national programmes which focused on action at the local level, and by that means to develop the necessary local capacity. However, the report did not discuss sufficiently the reasons for the disappointing results achieved by Sudano-Sahelian Governments in combating the effects of drought and desertification, to which it referred in paragraph 36. It was necessary to ask why many programmes of action in Africa had not worked, and to consider the extent to which the nature of external support to national programmes, including that by agencies of the United Nations, was related to that failure.

48. His Government welcomed the proposal for reduced operational activity, made in paragraph 40 of the Administrator's report. The role of UNSO should be to support implementation of effective national plans of action and to press for them to include policy proposals by national Governments as much as technical programmes. It should also be to facilitate the use by national Governments of existing resource flows, and UNSO should not be attempting to set up rival sources of funds in support of efforts to combat desertification; the bulk of the resources devoted to such programmes of action should come from funds available to the affected countries themselves.

49. He asked what exactly was being proposed by the reference in paragraph 34 of the Administrator's report to the use of the experience gained by UNSO in the Sudano-Sahelian region in "all other affected countries", and in what way that experience would be made available, for example, to countries in Asia.

50. The new role of UNSO after the Conference on Environment and Development should not require more funds, since UNSO was mandated to be an advisory body, rather than an operational body with projects of its own. His Government would encourage UNSO to follow the UNIFEM model in conducting advisory and catalytic work in its specialized field.

51. Mr. OLANIYAN (Observer for the Organization of African Unity) said that the important role of UNSO in combating drought and desertification should be strengthened, and its financial base increased, so that it could more effectively enhance the capacities of the Sudano-Sahelian countries themselves to deal with the problems of drought and desertification.

52. Mr. BRANNER (Director, UNSO), replying to comments made during the debate, said there were no proposals at present to extend the mandate of UNSO beyond the Sudano-Sahelian countries, which would require more personnel and financial resources, but the experience and capacity of UNSO should be made as widely available as possible.

53. It would be difficult at the current stage to respond in detail to the proposal made by the representative of Norway, on behalf of the Nordic countries, until it was clear how the various aspects of the struggle to combat drought and desertification would be rearranged at the international level upon conclusion of negotiations for the elaboration of an international convention.

54. He noted the requests made by the representatives of Lesotho and Botswana for the capacities of UNSO to be placed at their disposal, and the request made by the representative of the United States with regard to Capacity 21, which would be acted upon.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.